SPORT

Shahid fires 105 break in worlds opener

DOHA: Pakistan's current national champion Shahid Aftab made a powerful start to the IBSF World Snooker Championship in Doha on Monday, crushing South Korea's Hwang Chulho 4-0 in the last 64 round.

Shahid was in dominant form, sealing his victory with a flawless 105 break in the final frame.

The 43-year-old Shahid had set the tone for the match by winning the first frame 94-1.

He maintained his momentum throughout the encounter as he won the second and third frames (73-17, 60-25) before wrapping up the win in style.

The championship began with 87 players from 32 countries competing. The first stage will whittle the field down to 55 players.

Shahid's compatriot Mohammad Sajjad, the national championship runner-up, received a bye and qualified directly for the round-of-32 , which will be played on Tuesday.

The second stage of the event will flag off on Nov 8 where national cueist Mohammad Asif start his title defence. Asjad Iqbal and Under-17 IBSF champion Mohammad Hasnain will also start their campaign on the same day. —Agencies

Head released from T20I squad

MELBOURNE: Attacking batter Travis Head has been released from Australia's T20 International squad against India to get some red-ball practice in the Sheffield Shield before the Ashes.

The left-hander scored 28 in Australia's four-wicket win in Melbourne last week but managed only six from four balls in the third T20 in Hobart on Sunday as the hosts slumped to a five-wicket loss.

Head will be available for South Australia's Shield clash against Tasmania next week, Cricket Australia said on Monday.

The first Ashes test starts in Perth on Nov 21.

The T20 series is tied at 1-1 ahead of the fourth match on the Gold Coast on Thursday, with the series opener in Canberra washed out by rain. —Reuters

LAMINE Yamal of Barcelona shoots to score during the La Liga match against Elche at Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys.—AFP

Barcelona return to winning ways with victory over Elche

BARCELONA: Goals from Lamine Yamal, Ferran Torres and Marcus Rashford guided Barcelona to a 3-1 victory over Elche on Sunday, propelling the defending La Liga champions to second place in the standings with 25 points, five adrift of leaders Real Madrid.

Looking to bounce back after their 2-1 loss to Real in last weekend's El Clasico, Barcelona wasted no time in asserting their dominance at Montjuic Olympic Stadium.

They made the most of two defensive errors by Elche in the opening minutes to grab a two-goal lead with strikes by Yamal and Torres in the ninth and 11th minutes.

The first came when David Affengruber's errant pass was intercepted by Alejandro Balde. The left back surged forward and delivered a precise through ball to Yamal, who showed exceptional composure, cutting inside before unleashing a left-footed shot into the top corner.

It was Yamal's first goal in La Liga since Aug 31 and was a much-needed boost for the 18-year-old after weeks of struggling with a lingering groin injury.

Flick said Yamal's groin injury was still an issue that the youngster needs to work on.

"He has to train, have treatments, he has to do this and he did it, it's a good step forward for him," explained Flick.

"I cannot say it's over, it's coming and going like this and he has to manage it."

Two minutes later, Elche right back Adria Pedrosa slipped while attempting to control the ball in his own half and Fermin Lopez capitalised, pouncing on the loose ball and racing to the byline before delivering a low cross into the six-yard box, where Torres was on hand to tap the ball into the net, doubling Barcelona's advantage.

Rafa Mir reduced the deficit, scoring from a quick counter right before the break and he nearly equalised in the 55th minute when he struck the crossbar with a powerful shot from a tight angle.

However, the visitors' hopes of a comeback were dashed in the 61st minute when Rashford extended the home side's lead with a great finish from inside the box that went in off the crossbar.

Elche continued to fight and went close to narrowing the deficit again in the 67th minute, with Mir rattling the woodwork for the second time in the match.

Despite the visitors' efforts, Barcelona maintained control in the closing stages to secure three valuable points.

"It was very important to start strong and intense. From there, we could take the game where we wanted it to go," Torres told DAZN.

"We knew the type of game they were going to play and we started very strong. We were a bit off afterwards, but we found our spirit and our intensity again in the second half."—Agencies

Sinner, Alcaraz set for South Korea exhibition match ahead of Australian Open

SEOUL: Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz will play an exhibition match in South Korea in January, organisers said on Monday, as the top two men's players in the world ramp up their preparations for the Australian Open.

The pair, who have won nine of the last 10 major titles, will play in the Hyundai Card Super Match at Incheon's Inspire Arena on Jan 10, eight days before the year's first Grand Slam begins at Melbourne Park.

The exhibition has previously featured some of the biggest names in men's tennis including Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Pete Sampras, as well as women's greats Maria Sharapova and Venus Williams.

Organisers have yet to release information on the prize money on offer for the one-off match.

Sinner and Alcaraz met in three of the four Grand Slam finals this season and faced each other in the title decider at last month's Six Kings Slam exhibition tournament in Riyadh.

Sinner prevailed in that contest to secure a reported $6 million in prize money.

The Italian also lifted his first Paris Masters title on Sunday to reclaim the world number one ranking from Spaniard Alcaraz, who lost early in the tournament.

Alcaraz had taken top spot after beating Sinner in the US Open final in September to improve his career head-to-head record against his rival to 10-5 in official matches.

The pair also met in an epic French Open final in June when Alcaraz prevailed in five sets, before Sinner gained revenge in the Wimbledon title clash a month later.—Reuters

LENS: Odsonne Edouard (L) of RC Lens vies for the ball during the Ligue 1 match against Lorient at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis.—AFP

Lens back up to third in Ligue 1 as Lyon held at Brest

PARIS: RC Lens shrugged off a midweek loss to beat Lorient 3-0 on Sunday and stay within two points of Ligue 1 leaders Paris St-Germain, while Olympique Lyonnais lost ground after drawing away to Brest.

Former Celtic and Crystal Palace striker Odsonne Edouard struck early for Lens before Wesley Said and Samson Baidoo scored late on for the hosts after Lorient forward Mohamed Bamba missed a penalty.

Lens had missed the chance to supplant PSG at the top on Wednesday after a 2-0 defeat by previously winless Metz.

Meanwhile, Felix Correia netted his third goal in as many games to earn Lille a 1-0 win over Angers.

Lille are among a trio of teams four points back of PSG, along with Lyon, who held on for a 0-0 draw at Brest despite having Hans Hateboer sent off with just seven minutes gone.

Elsewhere, Esteban Lepaul continued his fine run of form with a hat-trick to fire Rennes to a 4-1 win over Strasbourg.

Lepaul is the league's second leading scorer with eight goals, just one behind Strasbourg's Argentine striker Joaquin Panichelli.

Metz strung together successive victories to climb off the foot of the table, winning 2-0 at Nantes. Toulouse and Le Havre drew 0-0. —AFP

Rybakina downs Swiatek in WTA Finals

RIYADH: Elena Rybakina extended her winning streak to eight consecutive matches with an impressive 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 victory over second-seeded Iga Swiatek in round-robin play at the WTA Finals in Riyadh on Monday.

After cruising past Amanda Anisimova in her opener on Saturday, Rybakina claimed her second win of the week to move to the top of the Serena Williams Group and plant a foot in Friday's semi-finals.

Rybakina was the last of the eight singles players to qualify for this season's WTA Finals, and she did so by clinching the title in Ningbo and reaching the semi-finals in Tokyo in the last two weeks of qualifying tournaments of the regular season.

"I've been playing really well the last few weeks. I was improving each match and of course the results were following after," said the 2022 Wimbledon champion.

"It's a great opportunity to play here against the top players. I'm really excited about the next matches and hopefully I can bring the same intensity and the same game."

Rybakina went into the clash having lost all four of her meetings with Swiatek in 2025, and it looked like she might suffer a fifth straight defeat to the Pole when she dropped the opening set in 35 minutes.

But the Kazakh sixth seed adjusted tactically, utilising her kick serve and big forehand to maximum effect to sweep 12 of the next 13 games and complete the upset in one hour and 37 minutes.

"It's always very tough to play against Iga, she brings so much intensity on the court. In the second set, I pushed myself, the serve improved and I'm happy I stepped in and played much better," said Rybakina.

"Mentally I'm happy I stayed focused no matter if I lost the first set, I was still trying to stay aggressive.

"I hope I can keep playing like this for the rest of the tournament."—AFP

RIYADH: Poland's Iga Swiatek in action during her WTA Finals group stage match against Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan at the King Saud University Indoor Arena on Monday.—Reuters

Kipchoge eyes seven events on seven continents

NEW YORK: Two-time Olympic marathon champion Eliud Kipchoge says he'll run seven marathons on seven continents over the next two years to raise funds for causes he believes in — even as he continues to race at the elite level.

Kipchoge's "World Tour" was announced after the Kenyan great, a former world record-holder, finished the New York Marathon on Sunday, crossing the line in 17th in 2hr 14min 36sec to cheers from the Central Park crowd.

"This unprecedented two-year journey will take [Kipchoge] across the world to compete in marathons on all seven continents, while continuing to race at the elite level," Kipchoge's management team said in a statement.

"This project aims to inspire the world to become a running world while raising funds for the Eliud Kipchoge Foundation in support of education and environmental causes worldwide, bridging the things that Eliud so deeply cares for."

Before Sunday's race, Kipchoge told Olympics.com that he wanted to run in Antarctica, saying his new project was a chance to "do that extreme thing that can make someone work hard."

Kipchoge, who will turn 41 on Tuesday, said in a statement that his globetrotting project will let him "compete not only for records but for the people.

"I want to continue to push myself to run at my best but I also want to inspire, give back, and remind everyone that no human is limited."—AFP

Oldest former Olympic champion Coste dies at 101

PARIS: The world's oldest former Olympic champion, ex-track cyclist Charles Coste, has died aged 101, French sports minister Marina Ferrari announced Sunday.

Coste won gold at the 1948 London Olympics and was a torch bearer at the 2024 Paris Games.

"It was with great sorrow that I learned of the death of Charles Coste, Olympic champion in London," Ferrari said.

"At 101 years old he leaves a huge sporting heritage." Coste passed away on Thursday.

He had been a promising cyclist until the start of World War II, but resumed his passion after the war.

He won a French national title in 1947 and took Olympic gold in London the following year in the team pursuit, helping France beat the British team in the semi-final and Italy in the title race.

Since the death in January of Hungarian gymnast Agnes Keleti, Coste, born February 8, 1924, was the oldest living Olympic champion.—AFP

Milan grind out vital win over Roma to leave Serie A tight at the top

MILAN: AC Milan claimed a crucial 1-0 home win over AS Roma on Sunday, with Strahinja Pavlovic's goal and Mike Maignan's late penalty save tightening the battle at the top of Serie A.

One point now separates the top four teams in the table with Napoli at the summit on 22 points, with Inter Milan, Milan and Roma all on 21.

Massimiliano Allegri's Milan are still unbeaten since a surprise home loss to Cremonese on the opening day of the season.

"It is too early to start dreaming, it's only November," Maignan told DAZN. "We have a good squad, we are united, we just need to take it one game at a time and not say we are challenging for the Scudetto right now. Of course, we want to win everything, but it's early days."

The visitors controlled the opening stages, creating chances and dominating play, with Paulo Dybala going closest when he fired wide from a good position.

However, Milan found the breakthrough six minutes before the interval with a swift counter-attack. Rafael Leao burst forward down the flank before cutting the ball back across goal for Pavlovic to tap it in from close range.

Milan could have doubled their lead before the break but Youssouf Fofana fired wide.

Milan had the upper hand in the second half, pressing relentlessly in search of a second goal.

Minutes after the hour mark, Leao had a golden chance to score from a tight angle, but Mario Hermoso came to Roma's rescue, clearing his effort off the line.

There was drama in the final 10 minutes when Roma were awarded a free kick in a dangerous position. The resulting shot struck the arm of a jumping Fofana in the wall, prompting the referee to point to the penalty spot.

However, Milan goalkeeper Maignan guessed correctly and denied Dybala's effort, sparking jubilant celebrations around the stadium."It was one of those matches that's easier to lose than win but we did okay, we showed character," said Inter coach Cristian Chivu.

Earlier on Sunday, struggling Fiorentina lost 1-0 at home to Lecce and remain winless from 10 Serie A games, while Torino and Pisa drew 2-2.

Fiorentina have not been relegated since being promoted from Serie B in 2004. —Agencies

MILAN: AS Roma's Paulo Dybala (not pictured) has his penalty saved by AC Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan during their Serie A match at San Siro.—Reuters